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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001021

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2016

TAGS: PREL MOPS NATO MARR TU GR

SUBJECT: AEGEAN: TURKEY STOPS FILING DAILY FLIGHT

SCHEDULES, CONCERNED ABOUT IMIA/KARDAK

REF: 05 ANKARA 2891

Classified By: Counselor for Political-Military Affairs Timothy A. Bett
s for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey stopped filing Daily Flights Schedules with NATO for military flights over the Aegean as of Jan. 18, but the GOT only informed us Feb. 28. MFA officials are concerned about rising tensions over the Imia/Kardak islets.
End summary.

¶2. (C) During a Feb. 28 meeting on another subject, MFA Deputy Director General for Maritime and Aviation Affairs Vakur Gokdenizler informed us that as of Jan. 18, Turkey had stopped filing Daily Flight Schedules with NATO for military flights over the Aegean Sea. Gokdenizler was sheepish about not informing us earlier, and said that the GOT was firm in this decision and had not wanted to raise this issue with us only to override our objections. (NOTE: Gokdenizler had informed us in May of last year that Turkey was considering no longer filing DFS (reftel), citing the lack of a parallel Greek CBM on the Aegean. We had advised against taking this unilateral step backward. We had asked another official in the MFA Aviation Department as late as Dec. 22 for the latest GOT thinking on filing DFS; he had assured us that no change in policy was imminent. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) Gokdenizler cited familiar Turkish themes on the Aegean flight issue: the Hellenic Air Force only used DFS to elevate tensions by routinely intercepting Turkish fighters entering Aegean airspace; GOG allegations of "FIR infringements" are a legal fiction; and Turkey only flies three to five percent of its missions over the Aegean, many times fewer than does the Greek military.

¶4. (C) Gokdenizler reported that the GOG has made no protest, public or private, about the DFS issue. He did say, however, that the Turkish Air Force is pleased that Turkey is no longer providing the Hellenic Air Force the data it needs to intercept Turkish fighters. He could not say, however, what the real impact has been, i.e., whether Greek fighters are intercepting Turkish fighters any more or less than before (we are checking with Turkish military sources). (COMMENT: The Turkish military -- especially the Air Force -- has been pressing for some time to stop filing DFS. We believe MFA had been pushing back, but with Turkey's EU membership bid

and developments on the Cyprus issue proceeding slowly at best, MFA had likely run out of arguments for continuing the practice. END COMMENT.)

¶15. (C) Shifting gears, Gokdenizler expressed concerns over rising tensions over the disputed islets of Imia/Kardak. He reported that before bad winter weather intervened in January and February, both the Greek and Turkish Coast Guards had become increasingly aggressive, sometimes with their ships passing dangerously close to each other. Additionally, he claimed that a Greek fishing vessel "had been sent" to the area "flying a Byzantine flag." Gokdenizler admitted that "we are an easily provoked people," and worried that after the weather improves tensions may once again increase over the islets. We urged Turkey to show restraint in response to perceived provocations.

WILSON